



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



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Spotlight On ... Robert Hardenstine

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San Antonio Express-News

Robert Hardenstine

Robert Hardenstine "aimed high" for the Air Force because he wanted to follow in the footsteps of his father and grandfather.

The third-generation Air Force member is a first lieutenant who has flown a C-17 cargo plane to the Middle East more than 100 times during the last couple of years.

"I wanted to serve my country because I looked up to my dad, but I had no idea how much I would love it for myself," the Clark High School and Texas A&M University graduate said.

Hardenstine, 25, said it always is interesting to find out what he will be flying halfway across the world. He has aided in presidential support missions and transported everything from blood for hospitals to Humvees and soft drinks for the mess halls.

Although he is stationed at McChord AFB in Washington, Hardenstine said he is proud to be from San Antonio and will always call it home.

"I can't believe I do what I do for my job. It is so much fun sometimes and so important that it doesn't seem like a job.

"The sky is my office."

San Antonio Express News

PAGE:

POSTED: 09 Nov 05



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Luke AFB, Ariz.



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Luke proposal limits traffic: New rule could hinder Peoria's airport

By Peter O'Dowd, Independent Newspapers

Four years of air traffic soaring near Luke Air Force Base netted more than 70 near mid-air collisions, a figure that warms military air traffic controllers to the idea of making a few changes.

Luke AFB's Chief Air Traffic Controller Chris Toale hopes to submit a proposal to the Federal Aviation Administration in Washington, D.C., by Jan. 1 that would require general aviation pilots to radio the base before entering designated airspace.

"The rule gets folks flying through the West Valley on our frequency," Mr. Toale said. "That's all we want. Everybody has a right to a bit of that airspace as our F-16s do. But we want to talk to them.

"Every day we wait really counts," he added.

The Luke AFB official said measures should have been initiated years ago but this is the first time a plan is in place. The proposed boundary extends 25 miles to the northwest of Luke AFB and 15 miles to the northeast and southwest. The lines are not perfectly straight, but they follow the base's take-off and arrival flight patterns, Mr. Toale said.

But the restrictions pose a dilemma for glider pilots operating out of Peoria's lone airport near Lake Pleasant Road and Carefree Highway.

A section of airspace immediately south of Pleasant Valley Airport is affected by the current proposal.

Airport owner Roy Coulliette said his fleet - unequipped with engines or radio transponders - would enter the restricted zone almost immediately after takeoff. Without the necessary technology he and his students have no way contacting Luke AFB air traffic controllers.

"What's a small problem for (Luke) is a huge problem for us," he said.

Glider pilot Paul Cordell said the dilemma hinges primarily on technology. Private glider operators who fly out of Pleasant Valley use more advanced aircraft and likely have the transponders necessary to radio the base.

"It's an economic burden on Roy," Mr. Cordell told Mr. Toale. "What would it save you guys if he had the radios and you write the check? In the big picture, that would solve most of the problems."

Mr. Toale and several other Luke AFB representatives who discussed the proposal at Pleasant Valley Airport agreed time remains for compromise. Waivers, exemptions and boundary changes are still an option. Reflectors can be carried onto gliders, which makes them clearly visible to radar.

Mr. Toale acknowledged "a small percentage" of the near misses involved gliders and the restrictions would only be in place Monday-Friday during regular business hours.

Mr. Coulliette does 50 percent of his business on weekends.

"It shows sincerity when they're willing to meet," the airport's owner said. "I think I'm more interested in safety than they are because if an F-16 hits us, they may fly on."

Newszap.com

PAGE: Internet

DATE: 09 Nov 05



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As metropolitan Phoenix continues to grow, more aircraft are diverted around the city, Mr. Toale said.

"We feel this is the only way we can protect the shrinking air space in the West Valley," he added. "What that means is more traffic is coming through the West Valley and Luke AFB. Because we have more planes coming through, we have more problems associated with it."



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LAFB better off than decade ago

By Jill R. Goodman, Independent Newspapers

Luke Air Force Base is better off now than 10 years ago, a Luke AFB official told the Glendale City Council last week.

During a Nov. 1 City Council briefing, Rusty Mitchell, director of the Luke AFB community initiatives team, shared strides made in protecting the F-16 pilot training base annexed by Glendale in 1995.

“We have literally gone from being known as the ‘encroachment problem’ back in Washington to the model of compatibility and land-use decisions around Luke Air Force Base,” Mr. Mitchell said. “Our position has never been to stop development; it has always been to communicate with either the cities or the county, (and) the landowners so that we have compatible development around the base. And we have achieved that in spades over the last two years.”

The community initiatives director shared Luke’s top priorities emphasizing they cannot take their “eye off the ball” even after surviving federal military base realignments.

“When you talk about Luke Air Force Base, so many people focus on the two airfields that are right here in your city and it’s really so much more than that. There’s many aspects of Luke that you need to take into consideration,” Mr. Mitchell explained.

l Luke AFB officials will submit an application to acquire a Special Air Traffic Rule from the Federal Aviation Administration at the year’s end, Mr. Mitchell said. They seek to require radio contact or “identification friend or foe” to prevent civilian and military aircraft crashes.

Since 2000, the base has logged almost 60 near mid-air collisions, when at least one pilot was forced to maneuver out of the way, Mr. Mitchell said.

“You will never be able to completely do away with that risk, but we think we’d probably handle most of it if we do that,” he said. “It will give us some control in that area that we do not currently have.”

Mr. Mitchell also explained Luke AFB pilots need the ability to land and takeoff in either direction.

l Luke AFB also needs access to the Barry M. Goldwater Range between Yuma and Tucson south of Interstate 8. This range has been used by military pilots since September 1941.

“If we cannot access the range complex, then we cannot train any longer,” Mr. Mitchell explained.

l The base must fly instrument approaches at Luke Auxiliary-1, which is about 17 miles northwest of the main airfield by Whitman, Ariz., Mr. Mitchell said.

This is used by new students and to train pilots in all-weather conditions — about 13,000 annual operations.

“13,000 operations is a lot. What we’re able to do is keep those 13,000 operations away from the main West Valley,” Mr. Mitchell said.

l Mr. Mitchell noted the base needs the ability to perform at the Gila Bend Auxiliary Airfield, which is used for aviation training and as an “emergency airfield.”

On average since 2003, two aircraft each year used the airfield because they would not have made it back to Luke AFB, he said.



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Another initiative is maintaining the ability to access the Gladden/Bagdad military operating area, which stretches west of the White Tank Mountains approximately to the California border, Mr. Mitchell said.

Arizona has more than 6,000 miles of military training routes that crisscross the state, he explained, noting most are in rural areas where pilots practice low-to-the-ground evasive maneuvers.

“The more rural parts of the state are certainly developing now and we do have encroachment issues that we’re trying to pay attention to,” he said.

He added a new state law requiring property owners to notify buyers when land in the military zone is a “huge step.”

“Nothing has changed because (Base Realignment and Closure) is over. Everything is still long-term mission-survivability of the base,” Mr. Mitchell said.

Dana Tranberg, interim intergovernmental programs director for Glendale, said briefings like these help keep the City Council and residents up-to-date on the base’s needs and may become more frequent if issues arise.

The City Council thanked the director for the presentation and shared the city’s commitment to doing its part to preserve the base’s mission.

Mayor Elaine Scruggs said the community initiatives team established in March 2003 has helped speed up the process when action is needed. The team was honored at the Western Maricopa Coalition “Best of the West” awards last month.

“We were all kind of rowing in the same direction but we needed a real strong guide and a real strong captain of the ship to help us,” Mayor Scruggs said.